Approved For Release 2000/09/14 : CIA-RDP86-00244R000200540004-2

Fires set in hotel show sprinkler system's capability

A dozen fires intentionally set last week in two rooms of a 175-room hotel in Tucson demonstrated with success a new automatic fire sprinkler system that the hotel management is installing as part of renovation of the structure (ENR 8/12 p. 16). "The sprinklers did a tremendous job in controlling the fire. In five to 10 seconds after the system was activated by the heat, the fires were out," said Tucson chief of fire prevention R.B. Slagel.

The hotel, the Pioneer International, was the scene of 1970's worst hotel fire, which left 28 guests dead. In making a comparison, Slagel added, "A guest may have gotten uncomfortably warm—even received first-degree burns before the fire was put out—but unlike the tragic fire of last year, the fire would have been confined to one room."

Four types of fires were started in the sealed rooms: a bed fire that developed slowly; a drapery, sofa and furniture fire; a closet fire; and a pile of wood set in the middle of the room. Two sprinklers shot a 17.5-ft-radius spray with a flow of 30 gpm.

Called the Life Safety System, its installation cost was unofficially estimated at $200,000. Hotel management estimated that if the fires were real, damage would have amounted to $500.

Bricks of crushed glass meet building specifications

A New Jersey research firm has produced building bricks, made from ground-up, nonreturnable glass bottles, that it says exceed the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) specifications for minimum requirements for water absorption and compressive strength.

To make the bricks, Tekology Corp., Palisades Park, used a process in which the crushed glass is combined with cement, chemicals and water and then formed under high pressure. Fifty bricks in white and five other colors have been distributed for inspection to members of the Glass Container Manufacturers Institute, which awarded the research contract to Tekology.

Says James Ryan, Tekology president, "Our aim was to meet the severe weather standards, which we surpassed, set by ASTM. The all-glass house, is now something that can be realistically achieved."

Steel house for glass plant—PPG Industries, Inc., Pittsburgh, is building a $50-million float glass plant that will produce 200 million sq ft of plate glass a year. The new plant, a pre-engineered steel building covering 1 million sq ft, will be manufactured and erected in Mount Holly, Pa., in six months by Armco Steel Corp., Middletown, Ohio.

Moving quickly—New York state acted to condemn nearly 9,000 acres to enlarge Stewart Airport, about 65 miles north of New York City, more than six-fold the day after a federal district court refused to issue a temporary injunction sought by neighboring towns and community groups. A hearing is still to be held, however, and the county has entered suit in state court claiming the taking is illegal. Generally, the plaintiffs object that there is no master plan and local citizens and officials have not been involved in the proposal to develop a major jetport, operated by the state's Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

New town program leader—Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary George Romney last week revealed that HUD assistant secretary Samuel Jackson was the White House choice for general manager of the new Community Development Corp., which will administer a subsidy program for new town developers (ENR 3/4 p.9). Jackson, whose nomination is still subject to confirmation, would remain an assistant secretary but draw just one salary.

Bubbles for the Indians—Four-in.-thick polyurethane foam houses shaped like bubbles with 882 sq ft of floor space and costing $9,200 may soon become a reality if an experimental project sponsored by the Ontario provincial government is successful. Two prototypes will soon be constructed on the Gibson Indian Reservation near Bala in northern Ontario for year-round living.

Japan builds in West Java—Japan will furnish $79 million worth of hardware and knowhow to develop the Djitibarang oil field in West Java. Two Japanese companies, Nippon Steel Corp. and Nigata Engineering Co., will do the construction work, which includes a 12-mile land-sited pipeline and a 9-mile submarine pipeline connecting the storage area on shore with floating buoys.

First Darien Gap project—The Panama Ministry of Public Works announced last week that 16 Panamanian and American companies are bidding on construction of the first section of the 250-mile Darien Gap, including a bridge over the Bayano River. All cement will come from Cemento Panama, S.A., and all structural steel will be provided by a U.S. manufacturer.

Offshore powerplant division—The Westinghouse Electric Corp., Pittsburgh, has announced the formation of a new division to develop the concept of platform-mounted nuclear powerplants for offshore locations. As presently conceived, Westinghouse alone or in partnership would design, build, test, and deliver the plant.

Chinese finance African port—China will provide a $20-million long-term loan for construction of a deep water port at Nouakchout, Mauritania, estimated to cost up to $60 million. Algeria is financing a $1-million feasibility study and the World Bank will lend over $2 million for a deep water wharf, jetty and two transit sheds.

Famous market to move—London's Covent Garden, a fruit, vegetable and flower market, will move to a new $60-million home in late 1973. The new market, covering a total of 70 acres, will consist of a 66,000-sq-ft flower market with a plastic roof supported by a tubular steel frame, a reinforced concrete vegetable market and twin reinforced concrete office towers.

Studded tires study—The Highway Research Board and Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory have undertaken a $100,000 study on the safety value of studded tires and the incidence of accidents caused by pavement wear resulting from their use. Utah will ban studded tires beginning April, 1972.

Schools graded F—San Francisco's Board of Education has ordered the closing of five more of the city's public elementary schools and the gymnasiums and main buildings of two high schools after a structural engineer found that the buildings would be extremely dangerous in the event of an earthquake. Last April, the board closed six other schools because of similar structural flaws (ENR 4/29 p. 15).

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